

Message Text

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45

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 SSO-00

INRE-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-11 H-03

INR-10 IO-14 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 SPC-03 OC-06

PRS-01 RSC-01 SS-20 USIE-00 USSS-00 SY-10 FAA-00

WRD-03 DRC-01 /148 W

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O 181420Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5695

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JIDDA 5573

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, SA, IT, BGY

SUBJECT: SAUDI MINISTER CONDEMS ROME TERRORIST

ATTACK AND HIJACK

1. OMAR SAQQAF, SAUDI MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CALLED ME TO FOREIGN OFFICE DECEMBER 18 TO EXPRESS HIS OUTRAGE AT THE RECENT MURDERS AND AIRPLANE HIJACKING IN ROME AND ATHENS.

2. MINISTER SAQQAF ASKED ME TO PRESENT THE SECRETARY
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WITH HIS CONDOLANCES AT THE AMERICAN LOSS OF LIFE AND

ASKED IF IT WERE KNOWN IN THE WEST THAT THERE WERE ALSO ARABS AMONG THE VICTIMS. I ASSURED HIM THAT IT WAS.

3. HE SAID THAT ONLY ISRAEL COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS CRIME. HE HAD THOUGHT AT ONE POINT THAT THE TERRORISTS WERE MISGUIDED OR MENTALLY UNBALANCED BUT THIS EXPLANATION NO LONGER WAS GOOD ENOUGH AND HE WAS NOW CONVINCED THAT ISRAEL WAS BEHIND THE LONG SERIES OF TERRORIST ATTACKS. EVERYTIME ISRAEL TAKES SOME OVERT ACTION AGAINST THE ARABS AND THE WORLD CONDEMNS IT, AN IRRATIONAL TERRORIST ACT DIVERTS THE WORLD'S ATTENTION.

4. NOW THAT THE ARAB STATES HAVE DECIDED TO RECOGNIZE THE PLO AS THE RESPONSIBLE PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATION AND ARAFAT AS ITS HEAD, ISRAEL SEES THAT IT MIGHT BE COMPELLED TO SIT DOWN AT THE SAME TABLE WITH PALESTINIANS WHO MRS. MEIR HAS ALWAYS SAID DO NOT EXIST. THE ISRAELIS DO NOT RELISH THIS PROSPECT. WITH THE MOST RECENT ATTACK, ISRAEL CAN GO TO THE WORLD AND ASSERT STRONGLY THAT IT SHOULD NEVER BE REQUIRED TO NEGOTIATE WITH MURDERERS. NO ARAB, HE SAID, COULD UNWITTINGLY HAVE PLAYED SO PERFECTLY INTO ISRAELI HANDS.

5. THE MINISTER SAID VEHEMENTLY THAT IF THE HIJACKERS CAME TO SAUDI ARABIA THEY WOULD BE SHOT. IF THEY WENT TO EGYPT THEY WOULD MEET THE SAME FATE. IT IS IMMATERIAL REALLY, IF THEY ARE ARAB OR PROVEN ISRAELI AGENTS, FOR THEY ARE CLEARLY SERVING THE CAUSE OF THE ARABS' ENEMY.

6. THE MOST FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE FOR THE RECEIVING GOVERNMENT TO TURN THE TERRORISTS OVER TO ARAFAT WHO HAS ALREADY CONDEMNED THEIR ACT. ARAFAT COULD STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION AND DEMONSTRATE HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITY BY TRYING THEM IN A "MILITARY" COURT AND THEN EXECUTING THEM.

7. IF THE PLANE GOES TO TRIPOLI, HE SAID, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QADDHAFI GIVES THEM REFUGE THEN QADDHAFI WOULD HAVE ALSO SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE A TRAITOR TO THE ARAB CAUSE.

8. MINISTER SAQQAF SAID HE KNEW THAT JURIDICALLY THE MURDERERS SHOULD BE TURNED OVER TO ITALY, BUT ITALY HAS NO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT. THEY WOULD THEN ONLY BE JAILED AND SOME OF THEIR FRIENDS WOULD SOON COMMIT SOME NEW ATROCITY TO GET THEM RELEASED.

IF THEY'RE DEAD THE QUESTION WOULD BE SETTLED. AND
IF THE WORD GOT AROUND THAT FUTURE HIJACKERS WOULD
RECEIVE LIKE TREATMENT, A FINAL SOLUTION TO HIJACKING
WOULD ALSO BE FOUND.

9. THE MINISTER DID NOT KNOW THAT FOURTEEN OF THE
VICTIMS WERE ARAMCO EMPLOYEES. HE SAID HE WOULD
PASS THIS ON TO THE KING WHO WAS ALREADY DISTURBED
BY THE MURDERS; SAQQAF WAS SURE THE KING WOULD TAKE
THIS ADDITIONAL NEWS VERY BADLY. (THE KING IS
PRESENTLY EN ROUTE OVERLAND FROM RIYADH TO JIDDA.).
AKINS

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